



Photos by Senior Airman Tonnette Boyd

Senior Airman Elton Johnson, 90th Maintenance Operations Squadron, shows off his skills recently as he records one of his newest songs during a recording session at his and his partners studio.

# Airmen bring 'flava' to Warren



Senior Airman Jason Daniels, 90th Maintenance Operations Squadron, writes lyrics at a recording session.

**Senior Airman Tonnette Boyd**  
*Public affairs*

In Cheyenne, where the biggest event of the year is the "Granddaddy of all Rodeos," two Airmen have found a unique way to share a slice of their culture with the town: rap.

Senior Airmen Elton Johnson and Jason Daniels, 90th Maintenance Operations Squadron, have partnered to form a rap duo. Airmen Johnson and Daniels, a.k.a. 9-Mil and JAO, have made an album, "The Mixtape, Volume 1," under the record label Suthernfryd Productions. Staff Sgt. Devin Henry, Air National Guard, a.k.a. D.J. Dotkom, runs both the production company and a Web site for the group.

"I was at a going-away barbecue, and we were just in the backyard free styling, and one dude said, 'you need to holler at my man.' So I sent [Dotkom] something, he liked it, and ever since then I've been off-and-on working with him," said Airman Johnson.

Many of the songs tend to

deal with the Airmen's lives before they joined the military. Growing up in Louisiana (Airman Johnson) and North Carolina (Airman Daniels), the two men experienced many things the average Cheyenne native may not have experienced.

"Just like anywhere, you have violence, you see a lot of things. It's dirty out there; I rap about what I've seen. I'm 23 years old so I haven't lived my life to the fullest yet, but I've been through some things. I rap about my emotions, and what I would like to do in life," said Airman Daniels.

"Wherever I moved to that's all I would see. I'd open the front door and that's what I'd see, so that's what I rap about. I wouldn't call it inspiration, violence doesn't inspire me ... but if you go through something, and you get on an album and talk about it, it kind of eases it, gets it out of your system. It's just the violence I grew up in, that I was raised in," said Airman Johnson.

Although the two Airmen will say they have their own style and their work has its own unique sound, they do

give credit to their influences.

"I don't want to get famous and then just rap about 'look at this car I'm driving.' It's the people who don't have cars and mansions that listen to these CDs; they could end up resenting you if that's all you talk about. I like rappers that talk more about their struggles," said Airman Johnson.

He continues, "There are times when I listen to DMX just to get through my day. Eminem can talk about any situation I've been through, that's why his stuff touches a lot of people. Jay-Z is one of the realest rappers out there. Even when he made it big he didn't rap about having money, he rapped about still trying to make money, fighting to stay ahead of the game, something the rest of us can relate to. I respected Tupac because some rappers try to hold on to this hard, masculine image, but if he was in love with a girl or wanted to rap about his mom, that's what he did. He wasn't afraid to talk about personal issues just because somebody might call him soft. That's why he's still got fans now. People like them affect

the way I see music, the way I write and rap," said Airman Johnson.

One might wonder if the content of 'Mixtape' conflicts in any way with the rappers' primary responsibility as Air Force members. However, if you ask Airmen Johnson and Daniels about this, the concern is unfounded. The lyrics, in their opinion, represent their lives before joining the military, and just because their lives have taken a new direction shouldn't mean they can't acknowledge where they started.

"I would say to anyone who has a problem with this, 'that's not what I'm doing now.' Look at my PIF, or try to find a UIF on me. No DUIs, DWIs, fights at the club, none of that. So let me write about what I've seen, as long as I'm not bringing it into the Air Force," said Airman Daniels.

He continues, "I came into the military because it was a way out. I go back home sometimes and I see my friends, some of them are locked up, some are dead, most of them are doing the same things and have nothing to show for it. I

don't want to go back to that."

"I've been in for about as long as [Airman Daniels] has, and I have no DUIs or stuff like that," Airman Johnson adds. "I know there are people who'd look at me, the CD, the tattoos and think 'I'll bet his PIF is pretty thick.' But I'm spiritual, family-oriented and probably one of the most down-to-earth people you could meet. If you put me side by side with some super troop, chances are that guy would get a DUI before I do, because I've seen what can happen, and I understand how much I would lose."

He continues, "There's a lot of stuff people can do while in the military that puts them in confinement, but I'm smarter than that. I came into the military to accomplish my goals, and that's what I'm going to do, I'm not going to distract myself from that. You might see some of how I grew up coming out in me sometimes, but that's just one side of me."

"I have a wife and a daughter, so I have to be smarter than some of these other guys who end up kicked out and

back home. If you've been there and you've done that and you got out of it, why go back? It makes you look kind of ignorant. I've been there, and I put into music what I've seen, but I'm not going back. I'm trying to move forward," said Airman Johnson.

In regards to specific Air Force members' opinions on their collaboration, the Airmen say they've received only positive responses.

"We get good feedback from people who heard our CD and liked it, but even more people say they're glad we actually made a CD, that we put it out there. A lot of people claim to be rappers, and there are a lot of good ones out there, but they won't make CD's or do shows. It's like they're waiting for a handout, and there won't be one," said Airman Daniels.

The group has performed at the Trail's End Club and Frontier Park, and has developed enough of a following that their Web site, currently under construction, has received many hits.

For more information, visit [www.suthern76.com](http://www.suthern76.com).



From left to right: Senior Airmen Elton Johnson, Jason Daniels and Staff Sgt. Devin Henry.